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ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6884-3504

Word of mouth and customers' perceived value of the restaurant industries in Dipolog City

Rey Mart A. Velos: Faculty, Jose Rizal Memorial State University, Dapitan Campus, Dapitan City, Philippines

Leo C. Naparota: Dean, School of Criminal Justice Education and College of Arts and Sciences, Dipolog City, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the impact of word of mouth on customers' perceived value in the restaurant industry in Dipolog City during 2023. It employed survey and correlational research methods, involving 328 respondents. The statistical tools used were weighted mean and Spearman Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient (Spearman rho). The findings revealed that the level of word of mouth in Dipolog City's restaurant industry was "very high" in terms of message frequency and "high" for messenger reputation, message richness, conversation dispersion, and delivery style. Overall, word of mouth in the industry was rated as "high." In contrast, the level of customer perceived value was "very high." A significant positive correlation was found between word of mouth and perceived value. Based on these results, the author recommends that restaurant managers and owners in Dipolog City use these findings to develop marketing strategies aimed at increasing customer engagement. Additionally, the author suggests that the local government of Dipolog City consider these insights when creating policies to support and improve the sustainability and growth of the restaurant industry, which could also boost local revenue.

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Introduction

Word of mouth (WOM) refers to a communication process, either face-to-face or electronically mediated, where individuals share their experiences, recommendations, or criticisms about a product or service. These communications, influenced by factors such as message frequency, the reputation of the messenger, message richness, dispersion of discussions, and the method of delivery, significantly affect customer perceptions in the restaurant industry (Oluwafemi &

* *Corresponding author. ORCID ID: 0000-0001-6884-3504*
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Dastane, 2016). A lower perceived value typically discourages customers from recommending a service, leading to less positive word of mouth (Bushara et al., 2023). Conversely, dissatisfied customers tend to generate negative word of mouth, with the likelihood of complaints being directly related to their dissatisfaction (Dalzotto et al., 2016).

Word of mouth from trusted sources, like friends and family, remains one of the most influential forms of recommendation. According to a Nielsen online survey, 84% of global respondents across 58 countries considered this form of WOM the most trustworthy. Trust in advertising on branded websites also increased significantly, rising 9 percentage points to 69% in 2013, marking it as the second most trusted format, up from fourth place in 2007. Additionally, 68% of respondents trusted consumer opinions posted online, which ranked third in 2013, up 7 percentage points from 2007 (Nielsen, 2013).

This study is crucial for the restaurant industry as it explores how perceived value influences word of mouth behavior indirectly through relationship quality. By understanding these dynamics, the study provides valuable insights into how word of mouth can serve as an alternative marketing strategy to foster long-term economic sustainability in the restaurant sector (Jalilvand et al., 2017). Notably, word of mouth has been shown to be more effective than traditional advertising in raising awareness about new products and influencing customers' decisions to try them (Mohtasham et al., 2017). It remains one of the most influential sources of information when customers make purchase decisions and is regarded as one of the oldest forms of marketing (Abd-Elaziz et al., 2015).

Numerous studies have examined the relationship between word of mouth and customer perceived value. Research on the effectiveness of word of mouth from the perspective of the receiver suggests that the impact of the message depends on factors such as the nature of the sender-receiver relationship, the richness, and strength of the message (Oluwafemi & Dastane, 2016). Another study highlighted the significant effect of word of mouth on customers' perceived value (Kuppelwieser, 2022). In the context of purchase decisions, word of mouth plays a pivotal role. As such, businesses need to foster positive word of mouth to attract attention and win consumer loyalty (Ayuningsih & Maftukhah, 2020).

However, many existing studies on word of mouth have overlooked the demographic profiles of respondents (Jalilvand et al., 2017; Basri et al., 2016; Bushara et al., 2023). This gap prompts the need for further research, particularly in the context of Dipolog City. This study aims to bridge that gap by exploring how the population group profile influences word of mouth and, in turn, affects perceived customer value within the Dipolog City environment.

Literature review

Word of mouth

Word of mouth refers to the sharing of opinions from one consumer to another, as well as the final stage in the consumer decision that convinces people to use the products or services and enter deeply into the target audience, delivering reliable messages that have been proven to change behaviors and attitudes in offices, homes, schools, blogs, and social networking sites. Word of mouth (WOM) is a casual communication between people who have consumed goods or services with their own perceived evaluation and people who want to experience those goods or services (Jalilvand et al., 2017). Customer-perceived value can contribute to good word of mouth marketing, which can be important for promoting the restaurant and its products and services (Alshreef et al., 2023). Word of mouth communication has always been a powerful influencer of customer behavior. Word of mouth from other customers is sometimes thought to be more credible. Customers frequently use the views or experiences of others as references when making purchases, especially when the product's quality is unknown (Wang et al., 2015).

Frequency of messages

The frequency with which messages are sent between customers and businesses is required for relationship strength. The number of interactions between exchange partners is measured as the number of actual transactions per period in frequency messages (Jung & Park, 2020). The frequency of word-of-mouth messages can influence customer perception of a business (Wang et al., 2013). A study by Groeger and Buttle (2014) highlights the frequency of messages can be misleading and suggests that proper measurement of the effects of word of mouth is critical in order not to confuse individuals with a high frequency of message reach with individuals whose perception of the organization’s value has increased.

Reputation of messenger

When the reputation of the word-of-mouth message source is high, listeners have a more favorable attitude toward the praised brand than when the message source is low. Other research, however, have demonstrated that the trustworthiness of a word-of-mouth message source is subjective and cannot always truly influence customer perceptions of business value, particularly when firms can mask sponsored communications as genuine word of mouth (Oluwafemi & Dastane, 2016). The reputation of word-of-mouth message sources/sender can influence the impact of the message on the receiver (Lim & Chung, 2014).

Richness of message

The richness of a word-of-mouth message can influence customers' perceived value of an organization. According to research on the effectiveness of word of mouth from the perspective of the receiver, the sender-receiver relationship, the richness and potency of the message, and other factors will all affect how the message affects the recipients (Oluwafemi & Dastane, 2016).

The richness of the message refers to the extent to which a word-of-mouth message is perceived to be informative, deep, and vivid. Richness of message content and strength of message delivery were selected as key factors in the reception of word-of-mouth messages (Asada & Ko, 2016).

Dispersion of conversations

Customers make purchasing judgments based on word-of-mouth dispersion. The difference in word of mouth shown in the standard deviation of star ratings, which is sometimes presented as a word-of-mouth star distribution histogram, is referred to as conversation dispersion. Dispersion talks might intuitively represent the total spread of word-of-mouth evaluation, and customers perceive risks and uncertainties. Low dispersion conversation suggests that the majority of consumers have comparable similar talks, demonstrating the product's stability; thus, customers tend to ascribe low dispersion conversation to consumers (Song et al., 2022). Customers' judgments are influenced by word-of-mouth dispersion, which reflects the degree of disagreement about a product. The importance of word-of-mouth dispersion in comprehending the relationship between customer decisions and word of mouth dispersion cannot be overstated (Xie et al., 2021).

Manner of delivery

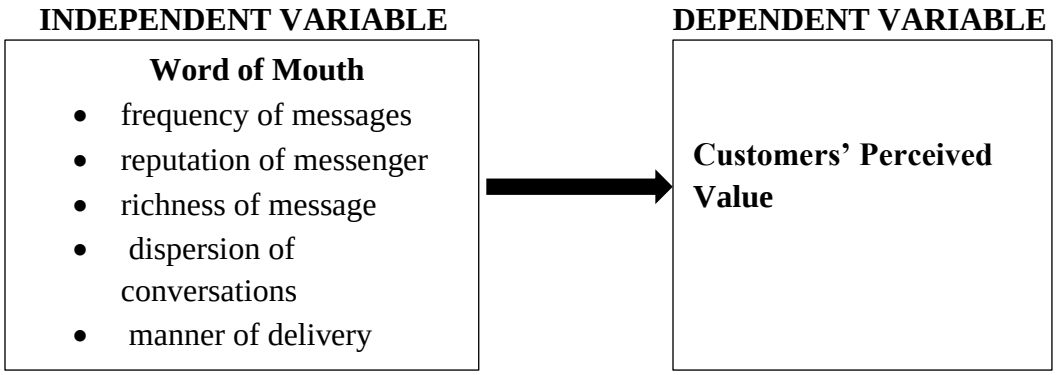
The manner of delivery of word-of-mouth messages indicates the strength of the message, and by extension, the strength of its influence on the receiver. Similarly, strong and a significant relationship was found in the case of the strength of delivery of negative word of mouth and perceived value although its impact was not as strong as the positive word of mouth (Sweeney et al., 2008). This means that while positive and strongly delivered word of mouth can result in a positive perception of the value of a restaurant, negative word of mouth delivered strongly can have the opposite effect. However, other studies suggest that while the manner of delivery of word of mouth is important, other factors such as the richness of the content and reputation of the messenger are critical to the persuasiveness of word-of-mouth messages (Wang et al., 2013).

Perceived value

Word of mouth behavior influences clients’ perceived value. The quality of service provided by employees has a beneficial influence on consumers' word of mouth behaviors. Consumers are more willing to say nice things about a firm when they believe there are fair procedures and practices in place to handle the problem, and when workers demonstrate concern and engage with consumers in a positive manner (Yen & Tang, 2019). When word of mouth is pleasant and appealing, customer perceived value rises. Customer satisfaction and profitable company activities are two examples of word-of-mouth customers. Customers' perceived value, loyalty, and trust can be undermined if they discover that a company's sponsored marketing operations are disguised as genuine word-of-mouth (Oluwafemi & Dastane, 2016).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1. First, the independent variable which is the word of the mouth with indicators categorized into frequency of messages, reputation of messenger, richness of message, dispersion of conversations, and manner of delivery. Second, the dependent variable which is perceived value consist of five (5) items.



Oluwafemi, A., & Dastane, D. O. (2016).

Figure 1: the framework reflects a correlation between word of the mouth and perceived value. The study intends to examine the influence of word of the mouth and perceived value.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the word of mouth and its effects on the customers perceived value in the restaurant industries in Dipolog City during the calendar year 2023.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the respondents perceived level of word of mouth in terms of:
   1.1. frequency of messages;
   1.2.reputation of messenger;
   1.3.richness of message;
   1.4.dispersion of conversations; and
   1.5.manner of delivery?

2. What is the respondent's level of customers' perceived value?

3. Is there a significant relationship between the word of mouth and customers' perceived value of the respondents?

Hypothesis

Numerous studies have demonstrated the significant influence of word of the mouth and perceived value (Oluwafemi, & Dastane, 2016; Kuppelwieser et al., 2022). Building on this research, the current study seeks to explore the effect of word of the mouth and perceived value of the customers.

Scope and limitation of the study

This study is limited to determining the word of mouth and its effects on the customers perceived value in the restaurant industries in Dipolog City during the calendar year 2023. The respondents of the study were limited to the three hundred twenty-eight (328) customers in Dipolog City including Grandmas restaurant, Morgias restaurant, and Bigjoes restaurant as respondents in the study. The researcher also limited its scope to five (5) indicators of word of mouth as independent variables, frequency of messages, reputation of messenger, richness of message, dispersion of conversations, and manner of delivery. Other descriptors of word of the mouth and perceived value may exist, but this study focused on the ones listed above. Furthermore, customer perceived value as the dependent variable in this study was limited to five (5) items.

Research methodology

Data gathering procedure

The study employed both survey and correlational research methods. The survey method was used to collect data through questionnaires that focused on word of mouth and customers' perceived value. The researcher distributed the questionnaires to a predefined group of respondents to gain insights on these topics of interest. Correlational research was used to assess the statistical relationship between the two variables, without the influence of any extraneous factors.

Research instrument

The primary research instrument was a questionnaire designed to measure word of mouth and customers' perceived value. The survey collected data directly from respondents, providing a structured approach to gather information on the variables of interest.

Tools for data analysis

The data gathered through the survey were analyzed using correlational analysis. This statistical method helped to assess the relationship between word of mouth and customers' perceived value, allowing the researcher to determine the strength and significance of their connection.

The following ranges of values with their descriptive interpretation were used:

Word of Mouth

Scale	Range of Values	Description	Interpretation
5	4.21-5.00	Strongly agree	Very High
4	3.41-4.20	Agree	High
3	2.61-3.40	Somewhat Agree	Average
2	1.81-2.60	Disagree	Low
1	1.00-1.80	Strongly Disagree	Very Low

Customer Perceived Value

Scale	Range of Values	Description	Interpretation
5	4.21-5.00	Strongly agree	Very High
4	3.41-4.20	Agree	High
3	2.61-3.40	Somewhat Agree	Average
2	1.81-2.60	Disagree	Low
1	1.00-1.80	Strongly Disagree	Very Low

Ethical considerations

The researcher secured permission and clearance from the Dean of the graduate school and the Ethics Committee of Andres Bonifacio College. Informed consent forms were provided to respondents, ensuring they were fully aware of the study's purpose. Confidentiality was prioritized, and respondents' identities were protected throughout the process, with assistance from designated customer representatives. After considering ethical factors, it was determined that an ethical assessment was not necessary, as the study did not involve sensitive human issues.

Data presentation and analysis

The data are presented following the statement of the problems of the current study. The study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the respondents perceived level of word of mouth in terms of:
    1.1. frequency of messages;
    1.2 reputation of messenger;
    1.3 richness of message;
    1.4 dispersion of conversations; and
    1.5 manner of delivery?

Table 1. *Perceived level of word of mouth in terms of frequency of messages*

A. Frequency of Message	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. I prefer restaurants that are broadcast to the public.	4.20	0.80	Agree	High
2. I think a positive buzz increases customer value perception of the restaurant.	4.38	0.72	Strongly Agree	Very High
3. I generally, request more information about a new restaurant after hearing praises about it.	4.34	0.77	Strongly Agree	Very High
4. I prefer restaurants whose services are communicated in various languages.	4.25	0.86	Strongly Agree	Very High
5. I attract restaurants that are regularly praised by friends.	4.34	0.80	Strongly Agree	Very High
Overall	**4.30**	**0.64**	**Strongly Agree**	**Very High**

Source: Oluwafemi, A., & Dastane, D. O. (2016).

Table 1 presents the perceived level of word of mouth based on message frequency. The results indicate that respondents "strongly agree" with statements such as believing that positive buzz enhances their perception of a restaurant's value, seeking more information about a new restaurant after hearing praises, being attracted to restaurants frequently praised by friends, and preferring restaurants whose services are communicated in various languages. Additionally, respondents "agree" that they are more likely to prefer restaurants that receive widespread public attention.

Overall, the level of word of mouth in terms of message frequency is high, with a mean score of 4.30 and a standard deviation of 0.64. This suggests that respondents place a very high level of importance on the frequency of positive word of mouth messages when choosing restaurants. This finding aligns with the research of Wang et al. (2013), who noted that the frequency of word of mouth messages can significantly impact customer perceptions of a business. Jung & Park (2020) further emphasized that the frequency of interactions between exchange partners, measured by the number of actual transactions, also plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions.

Table 2. *Perceived level of word of mouth in terms of reputation of messenger*

B. Reputation of Messenger	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. I prefer restaurants recommended by reputable sources	4.27	0.72	Strongly Agree	Very High

to influence restaurants' value perception.				
2. I prefer to visit restaurants regulated by government-approved agencies.	4.10	0.85	Agree	High
3. I rarely visit unknown restaurants except those recommended by someone trusted.	4.00	0.89	Agree	High
4. I prefer to visit a restaurant if the person recommending can provide proof.	4.16	0.88	Agree	High
5. I am willing to pay more at restaurants recommended by credible sources.	4.02	0.91	Agree	High
Overall	**4.11**	**0.69**	**Agree**	**High**

Source: Oluwafemi, A., & Dastane, D. O. (2016).

Table 2 illustrates the perceived level of word of mouth based on the reputation of the messenger. The results show that respondents "strongly agree" with preferring restaurants recommended by reputable sources. Additionally, they "agree" with statements such as being more likely to visit a restaurant if the recommender can provide proof, favoring restaurants regulated by government-approved agencies, being willing to pay more at restaurants recommended by credible sources, and rarely visiting unknown restaurants unless recommended by someone trusted.

Overall, the level of word of mouth in terms of the reputation of the messenger had a mean of 4.11 with a standard deviation of 0.69, which is categorized as "agree" and interpreted as "high." This suggests that respondents highly rely on the reputation of the messenger when selecting a restaurant to visit. This finding aligns with Lim & Chung (2014), who noted that the reputation of the source can significantly affect the impact of a word of mouth message. Furthermore, Wang et al. (2013) emphasized that the reputation of the messenger plays a crucial role in the persuasiveness of word of mouth.

Table 3. *Perceived level of word of mouth in terms of richness of message*

C. Richness of message	**Mean**	**SD**	**Description**	**Interpretation**
1. I prefer to look for specifics in any restaurant recommendations before visiting.	4.17	0.92	Agree	High
2. The detailed word-of-mouth message should be the basis for restaurant choices.	4.01	0.86	Agree	High

3. I disagreed with considering nationality biases in restaurant recommendations before visiting the restaurant.	4.05	0.95	Agree	High
4. I am not visiting a restaurant when friends do not have enough details about it.	3.70	0.98	Agree	High
5. I am not visiting a restaurant based on one-line messages online.	3.77	0.96	Agree	High
Overall	**3.94**	**0.77**	**Agree**	**High**

Source: Oluwafemi, A., & Dastane, D. O. (2016).

Table 3 presents the perceived level of word of mouth based on the richness of the message. The results show that respondents "strongly agree" with the idea that they prefer to seek specific details in restaurant recommendations before deciding to visit. They "disagree" with considering nationality biases in restaurant recommendations and believe that detailed word of mouth messages should serve as the basis for restaurant choices. Additionally, respondents stated that they do not visit a restaurant based on a one-line online message and avoid restaurants when friends do not have enough details about them.

Overall, the word of mouth in terms of message richness scored a mean of 3.94 with a standard deviation of 0.77, which is described as "agree" and interpreted as "high." This indicates that the richness of the message plays a significant role in the respondents' decision-making process when selecting a restaurant to visit. This finding supports the research of Asada & Ko (2016), who identified the richness of message content and strength of message delivery as key factors in how word of mouth messages is received. Oluwafemi & Dastane (2016) further noted that the richness of word-of-mouth messages can influence customers' perceived value of a business. Additionally, Wang et al. (2013) emphasized that the richness of content is critical to the persuasiveness of word of mouth.

Table 4. *Perceived level of word of mouth in terms of dispersion of conversations*

D. Dispersion of conversations	**Mean**	**SD**	**Description**	**Interpretation**
1. I prefer visiting restaurants that people are talking about.	4.27	0.76	Strongly Agree	Very High
2. I like famous restaurants.	4.18	0.85	Agree	High
3. I prefer restaurants whose websites include different testimonials from past customers.	4.20	0.82	Agree	High

4. I prefer restaurants with widely dispersed information reach.	4.10	0.84	Agree	High
5. I agree with online recommendations on making praise in restaurant choices.	4.13	0.82	Agree	High
Overall	**4.18**	**0.67**	**Agree**	**High**

Source: Oluwafemi, A., & Dastane, D. O. (2016).

Table 4 presents the perceived level of word of mouth based on the dispersion of conversations. The data shows that respondents "strongly agree" with preferring to visit restaurants that are frequently talked about. Additionally, they "agree" with preferring restaurants that feature diverse testimonials from past customers on their websites, being attracted to famous restaurants, agreeing with online recommendations that praise restaurant choices, and favoring restaurants with widely dispersed information.

Overall, the level of word of mouth in terms of the dispersion of conversations is "high" with a mean of 4.18 and a standard deviation of 0.67. This indicates that respondents highly consider the dispersion of conversations when selecting a restaurant to visit. This finding aligns with the research by Song et al. (2022), who suggested that when the dispersion of conversation is high, consumers may be more inclined to believe that the creator of such content might be posting false reviews for hidden motives and attribute the spread of word of mouth to potentially fake reviews.

Table 5. *Perceived level of word of mouth in terms of manner of delivery*

E. Manner of delivery	**Mean**	**SD**	**Description**	**Interpretation**
1. I like visiting a restaurant friends talk about passionately.	4.33	0.76	Strongly Agree	Very High
2. I agreed to scrutinize restaurants recommended by sponsored agents.	3.97	0.85	Agree	High
3. I preferred unfamiliar restaurants provided people talk about it excitedly.	4.01	0.93	Agree	High
4. I would visit a restaurant if people praised it with menu pictures online.	4.18	0.85	Agree	High
5. I agree that if people do not praise a restaurant passionately, it reflects on the restaurant's level of service.	4.19	0.92	Agree	High
Overall	**4.13**	**0.67**	**Agree**	**High**

Source: Oluwafemi, A., & Dastane, D. O. (2016).

Table 5 depicts the perceived level of word of mouth in terms of the manner of delivery. The result declares that the respondents "strongly agree" that they like visiting a restaurant that friends talk about passionately. The respondents also "agree" that if people do not praise a restaurant passionately, it reflects on the restaurant's level of service, they visit a restaurant if people praise it with menu pictures online, they prefer unfamiliar restaurants provided people talk about it excitedly, and scrutinizing restaurants recommended by sponsored agents. Overall, the mean is 4.13 with a standard deviation of 0.67 which is described as "agree" and interpreted as "high". This finding signifies that the respondents "highly" review the manner of message delivery before visiting a restaurant. The discovery agrees to the study of Oluwafemi and Dastane (2016), which indicated that the efficacy of message delivery is highly increased and has a notable influence when a verbal message is effectively conveyed.

2. What is the respondents level of customers' perceived value?

Table 6. *Customer perceived value*

Customer Perceived Value	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. I agree with the frequency of word-of-mouth messages.	4.42	0.70	Strongly Agree	Very High
2. I prefer reputation in word-of-mouth messenger.	4.29	0.77	Strongly Agree	Very High
3. I prefer detailed messages recommending a restaurant.	4.47	0.73	Strongly Agree	Very High
4. I prefer popularly known restaurants.	4.38	0.79	Strongly Agree	Very High
5. I prefer restaurants people are excited to recommend.	4.47	0.72	Strongly Agree	Very High
Overall	**4.41**	**0.61**	**Strongly Agree**	**Very High**

Source: Oluwafemi, A., & Dastane, D. O. (2016).

Table 6 presents the data on customers' perceived value. The results indicate that respondents "strongly agree" with preferring detailed messages when recommending a restaurant, favoring restaurants that people are excited to recommend, valuing the frequency of word of mouth messages, preferring well-known restaurants, and considering the reputation of the word of mouth messenger.

Overall, the customer perceived value is "very high," with a mean of 4.41 and a standard deviation of 0.61. This suggests that respondents place significant value on these factors when evaluating a restaurant. This finding is consistent with Gan & Wang (2017), who noted that customers who perceive higher value in a product or service are more likely to purchase it, pay a higher price,

and engage in word of mouth by sharing their experiences on social media platforms. Additionally, Alshreef (2023) highlighted that customers' emotional connection with a brand, driven by its perceived value, can lead to brand love, fostering long-term loyalty, especially in the digital economy and through word of mouth. Furthermore, Basri et al. (2016) found that tangible factors such as décor, dining comfort, and cleanliness of both the dining area and restrooms significantly impact perceived value, influencing service quality, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intentions.

3. Is there a significant relationship between the word of mouth and customers' perceived value of the respondents?

Table 7. *Test of relationships between the perceived level of word of mouth and customer perceived value*

Word of Mouth	**rho-value p-value**	**Customer Perceived Value**	**Interpretation**
Frequency of Message	rho-value	0.491	Medium/Moderate Positive Correlation Significant
	p-value	< 0.01	
Reputation of Messenger	rho-value	0.358	Medium/Moderate Positive Correlation Significant
	p-value	< 0.01	
Richness of Message	rho-value	0.381	Medium/Moderate Positive Correlation Significant
	p-value	< 0.01	
Dispersion of Conversations	rho-value	0.501	Large/High Positive Correlation Significant
	p-value	< 0.01	
Manner of Delivery	rho-value	0.491	Medium/Moderate Positive Correlation Significant
	p-value	< 0.01	
Overall	**rho-value**	**0.501**	**Large/High Positive Correlation Significant**
	p-value	**< 0.01**	

Source: Oluwafemi, A., & Dastane, D. O. (2016).

Table 7 presents the results of the test on the relationship between the perceived level of word of mouth and customer perceived value. Using the Spearman Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient (Spearman rho), the findings reveal a significantly large/high positive correlation between the perceived levels of word of mouth and customer perceived value (rho = 0.501, p-value < 0.01). As a result, the null hypothesis is rejected.

This suggests that as the level of word of mouth increases, the customer's perceived value also increases. Furthermore, this indicates that customer perceived value is dependent on the level of word of mouth. In other words, word of mouth has a significant positive impact on the customer's perceived value. This finding is supported by Kuppelwieser et al. (2022), who observed that word of mouth influences customers' perceived value. However, it contradicts the study by Oluwafemi and Dastane (2016), which found that word of mouth communication had no significant effect on customers' perceived value of restaurants in Malaysia.

Discussion

This study draws on the Mere Exposure Theory, which suggests that the more frequently an individual is exposed to a stimulus, the more they tend to like it. In this context, the theory helps explain how word of mouth influences customers' perceived value of restaurants. Essentially, as individuals are repeatedly exposed to positive word of mouth, their perception of the restaurant's value increases.

Mere Exposure Theory also highlights that personal, interpersonal, and situational factors can shape the impact of word of mouth, reducing perceived buying risks, improving perceptions of the business, and boosting purchase likelihood. In the restaurant industry, word of mouth is directly linked to customers' perceptions of service quality, based on their experiences and predefined expectations.

The findings confirm a strong, positive correlation between word of mouth and customer perceived value, meaning that as word of mouth increases, so does the perceived value of the restaurant. Conversely, when word of mouth is low, so too is the perceived value. Thus, word of mouth plays a crucial role in shaping how customers perceive the value of restaurants in Dipolog City.

Conclusion

A statistically significant correlation was found between word of mouth and customers' perceived value, indicating that word-of-mouth communication has a meaningful impact on how customers perceive a restaurant's value. The analysis of this relationship shows a strong, positive connection between the two variables. This suggests that regardless of the industry setting, customers consistently reaffirm their unique perceptions of value based on the word of mouth they encounter.

Authors' contribution: Conceptualization, research methodology, data gathering and analysis is performed by the authors.

Conflict of interest statement: All authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethical review statement: the research is submitted to the ethical review board and approved for the conduct of the study. It does not involve human-sensitive issues.

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